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SILENCE IN LIFE,
AND
Forgiveness in Death.

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THE LITTLE ARK.

Page 102.

Tales for the Young.

SILENCE IN LIFE,

AND

Forgiveness in Death.

FROM THE SPANISH OF FERNAN CABALLERO.

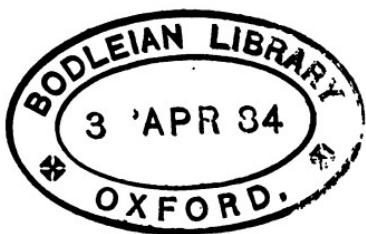
AND OTHER TALES.

BY REV. J. J. KELLY, O.S.F.

London:

THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,
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AND DERBY.
1883.

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P R E F A C E .

Fault was found with the original of the Spanish story, because Don Andrew had been allowed to go unpunished, and even to thrive on the proceeds of his crime. To take away such a reproach, I wrote some additional chapters, in which I endeavoured to bring a very bad man to justice. I have made no change in the original, and how far I have succeeded in what I have added, I leave the reader to judge.

In "Silence in Life, and Forgiveness in Death," we have a very striking contrast,—the cruelty of a polished villain, and the silent suffering of his broken-hearted wife.

J. J. KELLY.

LIMERICK,

June 24th, 1888.



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SILENCE IN LIFE, AND FORGIVENESS IN DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

A SKULL AMIDST THE FLOWER-POTS.

In the large city of M—— was to be seen a strange sight, that disgusted the strangers who passed through; for, as for the people of M——, so used were they to the sight, they had forgotten to mind it.

In the very heart, and amid the densest population of the city, in one of its most frequented streets, where the houses were vying in gaiety and neatness, a neglected, filthy, gloomy house offended the eye, saddened the mind, and suggested a strange and

melancholy contrast. The two houses built on either side of it were bright and gay. The fresh paint lay thick on window-sill and balcony, reminding one of the lovely green tints of spring time, and in harmony with the flowers that filled the flower-pots. A-top clustered the dahlia, with its coat of many colours, and the modesty that made it hide its head made the lily conspicuous. The heliotrope, knowing its own worth, and disdaining to be garish, took post behind the geraniums, nobles of the highest rank in the court of Flora. And in the place of honour were the camelias, cold, stiff, and without perfume, the soul of flowers, making the most of themselves, forgetful that the fashion and the novelty that made them the favourites of the day would neglect them on the morrow, and that they were the less likely to be remembered because they left no perfume as a remembrancer behind them. Over the silk fringe of the balconies, the pink, the most Spanish of flowers, drooped its lovely head, as if sick of its own sweetness. Behind the windows were drawn the

curtains, and on these were painted strange birds and outlandish nests in enchanted gardens.

But the empty house, with its gloomy walls, and rusted railings, and barred windows, had quite another look,—looked as if it shunned the light of day and the eyes of men, looked as if it had been shut out from the hum and bustle of life, looked as if a curse had been registered against it. Nothing but the outside could be seen, and on the outside for many a day wind had blown and rain had beaten, and the owner, grown tired of repairing, had left the place to loneliness and ruin. And as it stood there, so silent and so woe-begone, while its neighbours were so gay and lovely, it looked like a skull amidst the flower-pots.

CHAPTER II.

A CHAT.

In one of these two houses a fair and smiling lady was receiving visits. It was her name-day. Turning to a gentleman, who formed one of the circle around her sofa, she said, "So you have not engaged a house?"

"No," said the gentleman, who was a stranger; "some were too small for my large family, others were badly situated, and my wife, who is a great stay-at-home, insists on a good situation."

"There is no doubt," said one of the visitors, "that our population is increasing: there is not a house to be had."

"But, madam," added the stranger, "I have just seen the house next door, the untenanted one. It would suit me right well, and yet you never said a word to me about it."

"True, true," replied the lady; "I had forgotten it. However, we have been so accustomed here to count that house among the dead that you ought not to be surprised I did not take it out of its shroud."

"Among the dead? Do you mean you look on it as not existing?" asked the astonished stranger.

"Yes, yes, for nobody inhabits it."

"Why so? is it in ruins?"

"Not at all."

"Is it incomplete?"

"Nor that; it is a capital house, and wants nothing."

"Has anybody died in it of consumption?"

"Not as far as I know."

"What on earth, then, is the reason of its being uninhabited? Is it haunted?" said the strange gentleman, smiling.

"Exactly," said the lady.

"And do you tell me that in the full light of the nineteenth century, and in the teeth of our contempt for superstition?"

"I do, sir, because the ghost that haunts that house is the ghost of a crime, and that is

a ghost neither your lights nor your contempt for superstition can get rid of. That house was the scene of a murder."

"Naturally enough," replied the gentleman, "the murder must have given a shock to those who were living in the house at the time, and to the friends and relatives of the victim; but now that some time has elapsed, why should the house be left untenanted? How long is it since the deed was done?"

"Sir, years!"

"Superstition! Was the house guilty of the murder? Utility and convenience are the only guides of life recognized by the nineteenth century."

"What would you have, sir?" replied the lady. "We poor folks here have lagged behind the nineteenth century, and we are not at all ashamed of it. People have been so shocked at the crime, and so moved with pity for the victim,—a poor harmless old woman,—and so awe-stricken at the mystery that has covered, and is likely to cover, the doer of the deed, that no man has had the courage to break through the solitude of the

guilty house. The curse of loneliness hangs over the scene of the unpunished crime, and looks like the seal upon a letter, which God will break in His own good time, if not before the tribunal of men, at least before the supreme tribunal of which He is Judge."

At this point new visitors entered, and the conversation was broken off.

CHAPTER III.

A DEED WITHOUT A NAME.

The curiosity of the stranger had been too much excited to rest satisfied. In a few days he again called on the lady, and after the usual compliments resumed the conversation.

" You may think it strange that I insist so much, but my curiosity has been roused, and I want to know all about the murder you told me of the other day. It must have been shocking indeed when even time has not been able to blot the traces of it from your memories."

" With all my heart," said the lady; " I shall tell you all I know, all the world knows. But as it is a long time since the deed was done, and you were not on the spot at the time, I doubt very much if the story will make the same impression on you as it did on us. It must be now ten years since there came to town, and took lodgings in that unlucky house, a military gentleman, with his wife, three little children, and his mother-in-law. The man was a gentleman, every inch of him, in his conduct and carriage. The affection he showed his wife, who was very young, and had a simple open nature, was mingled with a father's gravity. The family was united and happy. The woman was all sweetness, proud and happy in being the bride of her noble husband, and the mother of the angels who were always round her feet. She was one of those model women whose life is limited to the duties of daughter, wife, and mother. As for the elder lady, she belonged to the class of what the world calls pious fools. She was pious, and spent her time in the church, praying for what she

loved, or at home, magnifying what she worshipped. These ladies were the owners of some property in a little village, and many persons called them the *villagers*; but for my part I always found in that family a courtesy that was always delicate, because it was always sincere, a frankness that knew when to stop, and a quiet, grave dignity, unmixed with pomposity or vanity. If that is to be a *villager*, 'tis no disgrace to be one.

"From time to time I used to visit them, for their inner peace, their quiet and hushed happiness, made me also peaceful and happy. I felt myself drawn towards that man, so respectable and so strict in doing his duty; towards his gentle wife, who built her happiness on her virtues, as others do on their pleasures; and towards the old lady, so simple and so loving, who spent her life in smiling and praying.

"Their happiness, though so holy and so modest, was perhaps too great to prove lasting in a world where, unfortunately, even the good think little of heaven when their lives are cast in pleasant places. Be that as

it may, my maid one morning entered my room in the greatest agitation. Her face was deadly pale, and she was trembling. ‘What is the matter, Manuela?’ said I, jumping from my seat.

“‘Oh, madam!’ said she, ‘it is shocking, it is awful.’

“‘What is the matter? What has happened? For heaven’s sake tell me!’

“‘Last night, next door,—don’t be frightened, madam.’

“‘No, no; go on.’

“‘The elder lady is dead.’

“‘Dead! good heavens!’

“‘Yes, madam; murdered, covered with wounds.’

“‘Holy Mary!’ cried I, in horror. ‘How did it happen? was it robbers?’

“‘So they think; but nothing is known for certain.’

“The fact was,” resumed the lady, “that the orderly, who slept in a room off the porch, got up that morning to go to market. He found the street door bolted, just as he had left it the night before, so it was clear the

murderers had not entered on that side. But on his return from market he was surprised to find the inner door ajar. He leaned upon the door, it opened ; he passed on, and what was his astonishment at seeing the water in the fountain of the courtyard tinged with red ! More ominous still, the smooth wall by the staircase bore the imprint of a bloody hand. Perhaps the assassin reeled as he was coming down the stairs, and seeing himself stained with human blood, he leaned against the wall for support. Perhaps the wall had kept the mark of the guilty hand to serve as an accuser of the murderer, and to show the way he had gone to the avenger of blood.

“ Horror-stricken, the orderly mounted the stairs, following the blood tracks as he went, which, like the fingers of an avenger, pointed the way he should go to discover the crime. He reaches the dark and distant chamber of the elder lady, of her who would never believe in sin, for she could never understand it. A lake of blood stretched out to the very door, of blood liquid and warm. The brick floor had drunk none of it. The

corpse lay stretched upon the bed, with its eyes wide open,—the face was alive with affright,—and a white and rigid arm, as white and as rigid as wax, hung outside the coverlet. The terrified man burst into loud screams, and sped from room to room to call the members of the family. What a sight for the unhappy ones! The daughter fell as if she had been shot. Her husband, deadly pale, but still master of himself, ordered the house door to be locked, when a crowd assembled at the orderly's outcry, and sent for the police. They came and found—the corpse. They saw the gaping wounds, poor mouths that accused the crime, but not the criminal.

"It was strange, but a fact, that not the slightest suspicion was attached to anybody, nor could the smallest clue be found to throw light on the subject. The orderly slept just outside the inner door in the porch, a door whose lock was on the inside, and this door he found open. Probably, then, the murderer had hidden himself the day before inside the house, or had got in through the roof. The latter alternative did not look very likely or

even probable when viewed in the light of the fact that the three houses,—mine, the house of the murderer, and the Countess M's,—formed one block, an island surrounded by streets. The maid-servant had spent the night out at the marriage of a sister of hers, as was deposed by a large number of persons who were at the marriage. Another man-servant was sick in the hospital, and unable to move. In spite of that they were both arrested, but after awhile were again set at liberty. So shocked was the man-servant at the mere suspicion of being concerned in the business,—he was very good, poor fellow, a native of Majorca,—that he lost his mind, and on quitting the prison was transferred to the lunatic asylum. The maid-servant fell into such disrepute that no mistress would take her for a servant, and the man to whom she was engaged to be married broke off all communication with her. From disgrace she fell into despair, went upon the town, and was lost.

"The police did their best, which was nothing. They had nothing but suspicions

to go on, and suspicions, so far from giving any light, did not give them even twilight. The more mysterious a crime is the more it affrights. Terror grows in the dark. The people were clamouring for punishment, and the judges were panting to inflict it,—but on whom? It would appear as if God had reserved the punishment to Himself. No one knew at the time, nor after, nor perhaps ever shall know, whose hand it was that did the deed.”

“ And what became of the officer and his family ?” said the stranger, greatly moved at the tale.

“ You know,” replied the lady, smiling, “ that foreigners are always casting in the teeth of us Spanish ladies our impetuous nature, our yielding always to the first impulse, and our contempt for stiff decorum, which is so often, I own, prompted by delicacy, but more often born of cold egotism. We Spaniards are frank and headlong. We do not stop to reason when the heart moves us. My heart moved me, and the moment the police quitted the officer’s house, I ran

thither to aid and solace my unhappy friends. Never shall I forget, never will it be blotted from my mind, the sad picture that met my eye. The corpse, which still remained in the room in which it was found, was not only seen, *it was felt*. There was a chill in the air. The whole house smelt of blood. The water that filled the basin of the fountain was still red, as red as if it had not been fed with fresh water. It seemed as if one drop of innocent blood were enough to taint the waters of the fountain for ever, just as it would be enough to stain a soul. My poor friend, who was so attached to her mother, was in convulsions. At the sight of me she screamed, she wept, and disburdened her over-laden soul. Her husband was standing by like a statue. He looked as if the flow of his blood had been checked, such was the deadly paleness of his face, and of his lips, which were knit together. I brought the unhappy woman to my house, and thence, shortly after, when her husband had succeeded in effecting an exchange, they passed to a

distant province. They could not live in that house of horrors."

"But why was she murdered?" asked the gentleman.

"To rob her, it is supposed. That very morning, according to her daughter's story, she had received a large sum of money through a notary. Suspicion fell on him, and though nothing was proved, everything was believed against him. Suspicions that get upon the tongues and into the minds of all men kill a reputation much sooner than notorious facts. A man may meet facts by alleging excuses, pleading justification, showing repentance, and when a man repents he is near pardon."

"That is quite right," replied the stranger. "Society, which is and ought to be merciful when an offence has been purged, is pitiless in front of unpunished crime, and that is logical. But have you heard news of your neighbours?"

"Yes, often; but of late I have lost sight of them. I have been of some use to them in the village they have removed to. The

husband has retired from the army, set up in business, and succeeded in all he has put his hand to. He is now one of the most important men of the place, a respectability, as we say. He has been alcade, and provincial deputy, and goodness knows what else. His wife, when I last heard of her, was living her old happy stay-at-home life."

"If I may judge by the outside," said the stranger, with a cold, bitter smile, "there is still that misery about the house that the crime once committed there inflicted on men's hearts."

"The misery of crime is upon the house ; the misery of sorrow has been deadened in the heart. Grief cannot last for ever in this world : such is the will of Him who knows what is best for us. The sun that shines to-day makes us forget the sun that went to his rest on yesterday. When you smell the sweetness of a flower do you remember the fragrance of one that is withered ? Condemn not forgetfulness, that balsam, that panacea, that elixir of life, which God sends to men as

He sends the dew of heaven to His plants.
Without it what would become of us?"

"Is that philosophy or popular insensibility?"

"Neither; it is the truth, simple and practical. But tell me, do you mean to take that house? I should be delighted if the presence of a worthy and amiable family were to rid the house of its ghost."

"Thank you, madam; I don't mean to take it. I don't care to face the sort of ghost that haunts that house, the sole depositary of a mysterious and awful crime. Let it remain alone with its guilty secret."

CHAPTER IV.

PEACEVALE.

There is a village, which we shall call Peacevale, nestling in a quiet nook in one of the last spurs of a mountain-range. A blazing sun ripens its harvests, and the clear stream waters its orange groves. The pome-

granate and the almond-tree are in haste to drop their rich crop. The mountains that tower all round it shut out Peacevala from the rest of the world. The church rises calm and dignified in the midst of the little village. Under the roof of the farmer rested the plough, teacher of daily labour, and giver of daily bread. The children learn the catechism, kiss the parish priest's hand, and beg their father's blessing. The nineteenth century, with its lights, scorned these poor people, ranked them among the mummies, blotted them out of the number of the living, and said over the little village, as if it had been another Pompeii, "Light lie the earth upon thee."

It was a spring evening, after a summer's day. The breeze had got coolness amid the snows of the mountain-peaks, and had gathered sweetness from the rock-roses that covered their declivities. It was twilight in the valley, but the mountain-tops that walled it in were still ablaze, like so many bonfires, with the sun-light. The gentle ripple of the water could be heard, and the stream could

be seen obediently following the path marked out for it by man, now encircling an orange-tree like a belt of polished steel, now spreading over a square bed freshly planted with vegetables, like a sheet of polished glass. The shrill piping of the cicola could be heard, and the gentle bleating of the sheep, and the cows' distant lowing. The swallows were cleaving the air aloft in gay irregular movement, and the children, as they saw them, cried out, "These boys have got out of school." And the drowsy bat was hovering nigh upon the wing, poor plumeless bird, that hides itself from the light of day, so ugly that the people along the country side call the creature a *fright*. The bee, all the while humming, was quitting his task, for the dew was falling heavy on his flowers; and the plaintive hooting of the owl* rang out

* The peasantry of Andalusia will tell you that once upon a time the owl sang the sweetest of birds. It was present at Calvary when the Redeemer was dying. Since then it has lost its song, and can only repeat *cruis, crus,* (pronounced *crooth*, and meaning *cross*.) There are men who will call this superstition, but did these men ever hear of such a thing as poetry?

clear and solemn on the evening wind. . . . This old-fashioned, Christian, Spanish people of arms, bathed though they are in the light of their sun and of their altars, are, as we have remarked, all unshone upon by the light of the century. At the time of which our story tells, no fiery speeches, no political songs, were heard, and no one shouldered the musket of the conscript. You can imagine, then, the astonishment of the good people of Peacevale when they saw, one evening, a body of men, half rustic, half military in appearance, enter the village, and heard them shout at the top of their voices, "Liberty for ever!" The armed and dusty band of warriors, and their strange appearance, astonished the tame people of Peacevale. The word spread that the strangers were prisoners, who had escaped from the gaol of Madrid, and fled to the hill country, huzzaing for their liberty. For a time the Peacevalers were panic-stricken, but they plucked up their spirits when, soon after, they heard the beat of the drum, and saw a

column of soldiers, in good order and at slow pace, defiling through the village.

The people have for the army, which is raised from themselves, a deep sympathy, a sympathy mingled with pity and admiration. The soldiers are looked upon as victims, it is true, but victims in a holy cause, in the cause of God, and king, and national independence. There are no prouder memories in the Spanish army than the war of independence.

Matters began to be understood when the troops came. It began to be said at once, (what had been totally unsuspected at Peace-vale,) that there was a band of rebels in the mountains, and that a body of national volunteers, (the men who had frightened the village out of its propriety,) and regulars were upon their track. The only subjects of astonishment that remained for the Peace-valers were that men should cheer for liberty who were never in gaol, and that there were rebels in the mountains. The volunteers reconnoitred the neighbourhood, marched and counter-marched, got blisters on their feet, and met nobody. The soldiers were

under orders to establish their quarters at Peacevale. A captain was in command, and was billeted with the widow of a rich and respectable farmer. This lady had one son, who worked his farms in the old-fashioned style, in which his father and grandfather had grown rich. She had also one daughter, fifteen years of age, who was the pride of that happy and virtuous home. The captain, Andrew Penalta, was a handsome man, but disappointments had soured his temper, and left him a melancholy man. He felt his disappointments the more that he belonged to a class of men, rather numerous in our days, the class of those who always believe themselves superior to the circumstances they are placed in, and the position they fill.

But the calm peace of the happy home had a good effect on the gloomy soul of the officer. He was won on from his brooding by the girl, the idol of her own home, and the joy and the pride of the village, with her dowry of youth and innocence: the pledge of her happiness, her virtues; the pledge of her prosperity, her fortune. The last was a

weighty consideration for a man ambitious of telling in the world, and his ambition was all the fiercer for having been so often thwarted. Penalta, by his brilliant uniform and respectable appearance, had won the admiration of the whole village, and especially of his hostess and her daughter; consequently, the day he asked Donna Mariana for the hand of her daughter Rosalia, the mother could not conceal her satisfaction, and the obedient girl, seeing her mother satisfied, was satisfied herself. The gossips and neighbours joined their voices in a chorus of approbation, and the lady's son stood alone in his opposition to the match. In vain he told his mother that their property,—some farms covered with flocks and herds,—was large only when unbroken; that if any one of the family withdrew his or her share, if the farms were divided or sold, the loss would fall on all. In vain he added that his sister ought to be married to a neighbour in the village where they had lived from father to son, happy, beloved, and respected. Mariana's heart too full of the brilliant match for her

daughter, and when her son insisted in his opposition, she told him that his anxiety about the division of the property arose from selfish motives. In spite of this rebuff, (which some busybody had got the good lady to utter,) the son kept on openly opposing the marriage of his sister, so that at last, his mother, annoyed at his perseverance, declared she would quit her son, and go and live with her daughter. The wealthy widow's intention suited the captain, who urged it on to the best of his power. He succeeded so well that a little later the marriage took place, and the family quitted the village.

For seven years they led a life of unbroken peace, thanks to the angelic character of both women, and the smallness of their domestic circle. They lived only to admire the captain, who was now a commandante, and to pour out their hearts' love on the three children who were the fruit of the marriage. Apart from this, the women had no existence, overshadowed as they were by the starched pride of the commandante Penalta. What a sad world this is, in which you can neither get

nor keep a place except by fighting for it! How weak and mean is human nature, that bears hard upon the humble, and abases itself before the insolent! This alone would be enough to show us how paltry we are, and to wait with anxiety the coming of that Judge on whom no glitter can impose, and to whom no darkness is impenetrable.

So it was with these ladies. Their modesty, humility, and gentle manners, far from being appreciated by Don Andrew, only made them appear weak in his eyes, and strengthened his haughtiness and tyranny. But as the man wished to stand well with the world, and was most anxious to *appear* a man of worth without *being* it, he treated his wife and mother-in-law with the greatest consideration in public, and played what the French call the benevolent sovereign, that is, he graciously descended from the throne to those who knelt before it. But in private he recouped himself by treating them with the greater contempt. The mistakes made by his wife in society set his teeth on edge. It was only too natural that the poor lady, reared in

a country village, should know nothing of the ways and fashions of a large city. She could not dress elegantly ; she would not sit half a day at her toilette ; she neither sang, nor danced, nor played the piano. He was ashamed of her ignorance, and from wounded self-conceit kept hurting and humiliating her by dinging into her ears, "*Tu no sabes nada,*"—" You know nothing." On two things hard tyranny falls powerless ; on iron, which resists, and on the willow, which gives way. There was peace in Don Andrew's home ; the ladies were willows, and the will of the despot raged like the blast of a hurricane over a plain covered with green and gentle grass.

CHAPTER V.

THE COPY-BOOK.

Meanwhile the relations between Donna Mariana and her son were growing worse from day to day. At the suggestion of her son-in-law she was perpetually finding fault with the accounts of her property sent her by her son, and at last insisted on a division of the whole property, and the sale of her portion. After much discussion this was done shortly after her arrival at M——. This arrangement pleased everybody, and the good lady felt herself eased of a weighty burthen when she had got rid of all motives of quarrel with her son and son-in-law.

One morning, when she had come home from Mass, a notary, who was her son's agent, brought her fifteen hundred *onzas* in gold, the last instalment of the price of her farms. She had signed the receipt, and was sitting by her daughter's side, congratulating

herself on having made an end of the business, when the eldest of her grandchildren entered. The child was in great glee, and held in his hand a copy-book, which he showed to his grandmother. The old lady took it in her hand in that kindly way she had always for her grandchildren, and read aloud the headline, "*Count not on the morrow ; for thee it is uncertain.*" She looked down the page with approbation.

"You always repeat the line, Andy," said she.

"Yes," said he, "except the last one."

The grandmother read, "*Andrew Penalta,
20th March, 1840.*"

"My child," said she, "this is the 19th, St. Joseph's day."

The child laughed, and cried, "'Tis a mistake ; but what matter ? In any case I shall write it to-morrow."

"And do you so soon forget the very sentence you have written, '*Count not on the morrow ; for thee it is uncertain*'?"

"Well, I'll correct it," said the child, catching up the copy-book, and settling him-

self to the work. In a moment or two he had the correction made, and handed the copy-book again to his grandmother.

"Why, child," cried she, "have you written the numbers in red ink? The date is written in blood."

"The red ink was on papa's table, and is very pretty."

"No, but very nasty," said his mother; "and the correction looks like one huge blot. Tear it, child, and to-morrow, please God, you will write a better copy for grandmother."

"No, no," said the latter; "give it to me, my dear. You have written it for me, and it tells me a good and holy thing, not to *count on the morrow, for the morrow is uncertain*; and that means we ought always to be prepared for death, which brings us before the great Judge of souls. So I mean to keep the copy as a good reminder, and as a good advice. Look," she added, putting on the table twenty *onzas* on the top of one another; "I am so well pleased with the way you mind your lessons that you shall have these twenty *onzas* on my death. I'll write my

intention at the foot of the copy, and fold it over the money."

She seized the pen with which she had just written the receipt, and wrote at the foot of the copy, under the date and the child's name, "A memento from Mariana Perez." She then folded the copy round the twenty *onzas*, and having put them in her strong box with the rest of the gold, retired to her room.

On that very night the poor old lady was murdered. We have already related the deep grief of Rosalia, and the stupefaction of her husband, who now perhaps regretted the sadness he had brought upon the poor lady, who loved and respected him so much. The loss of so large a sum of money, which was never recovered, the mystery which shrouded the crime in spite of all the efforts of the authorities, and their belief that some secret enemy was near them, made it impossible for the husband and wife to remain any longer in the town of M——, and at the request of the commandante they were removed to a distant quarter.

CHAPTER VI.

A NOTABILIDAD.—(A VILLAGE CÆSAR.)

Ten years were spent in their new home, in which, immediately after their arrival, the husband and wife met a kindly welcome. Their prospects improved. An uncle of Don Andrew's died in America, leaving him his heir. He now quitted the army, and tried his hand at various sorts of business, among others, pulling down convents, and selling the materials cheap. He had been *alcalde*, and was now provincial deputy. In a word, he had reached the position of a *Notabilidad*, or village Cæsar, the type of a modern citizen; that is, he spoke hugely on huge subjects, was a jealous apostle of morality, a fervent preacher of philanthropy, a stubborn opponent of superstition, in which he classed the observance of the Sundays and holidays; was high-priest of the goddess reason, professor of the modern art of snobbery, and the

clever architect of his own fortune. Nothing was wanting to his importance. He was the Demosthenes of a company which had been formed for the construction of a canal. The works of the new company were very far advanced; nothing was wanting to the new canal but the money to open it, and the water to fill it.

It is an advantage of the gentle not to be abased by misfortune, and to be free from sudden and violent gusts of passion. This advantage Rosalia enjoyed. You might have been tempted almost to call her happy only for the way her husband treated her. His good social position, his unvarying success, and his importance grew day by day, and with them grew day by day his ill-treatment of his wife. He was ever remonstrating with her about the training of their children, whom the mother would pet, and this furnished him with an opportunity of ringing the changes on his old insult, "*You know nothing.*" At times Rosalia would cry at all this; at times she possessed her soul in patience; but a word she never answered, for she said to her-

self, "It is natural enough for these things to be said by my husband, who knows everything, to me who know nothing but how to sew and pray."

How true it is that humility, like innocence, knows not its own worth. But a time was coming that was to show Don Andrew how much his wife knew in knowing how to be a Christian, and how superior is the virtue of a Christian woman to the stoicism of our so-called philosophers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LEGACY.

One day, when Rosalia was teaching her daughter, a sweet and gentle girl, as her mother had been, what she knew, that is, *how to sew and pray*, the younger of her two sons entered. "Mother," said he, opening out a sheet of paper, "there's a copy of Andrew's when he was a little boy."

Rosalia took the paper, and read, with

amazement, “*Count not on the morrow; for the morrow is uncertain.*” At the foot of the page the date was red and bloody, “*Andrew Penalta, 19th March, 1840;*” and below, in the handwriting of her mother, “*A memento from Mariana Perez.*”

“Where did you get this sheet of paper?” asked Rosalia, in a voice so strange and altered that the children looked at her with astonishment.

“Among some old papers in my father’s room,” answered the child.

Rosalia made for her room, looking pale as a ghost, and locked her door, and pulled down the blinds to shut out the light of day. The veil that for ten long years had covered the murderer of her mother was lifted. The murderer had stolen the money. Some of that money had been wrapped in that paper, with the bloody date, and that paper had been found in the possession of her husband. She let herself fall on a sofa, and hid her face in her hands. There she remained for hours, motionless as a statue, and cold as a corpse. At first she could not think; her brain reeled,

and her thoughts were in confusion ; but later on came reflection, and Christian charity, and human prudence ; and then, clasping her hands, the Christian mother and wife exclaimed, "Thine, Thine, O Father and Judge, is judgment ; Thine is vengeance !" She arose from the sofa with new courage, lighted a candle, and held the accusing copy to the flame till it was burned to ashes.

A little later Don Andrew came in, and asked in his usual harsh voice what she meant by locking herself up in such a manner. When she heard the voice of the murderer of her mother, and felt him near, the poor woman trembled with affright. Summoning up all the strength of her soul, she answered she was ill. He burst out of the room with impatience. He would not admit her right even to be ill. For eight days did Rosalia remain locked in, allowing nobody, not even her children, to see her. She said she was suffering from a fierce pain in the head ; but the truth was she feared the terrible secret she wished to bury for ever in her bosom would burst from her. She spent her bodily

strength in tears and fasting, but recovered her strength of soul by prayer and motherly love. When she arose from her bed, and her husband saw her, he fell back in astonishment. Her hair had turned grey. The greenish paleness of the jaundice discoloured her worn face, and her eyes were sunken and feverish. "You are ill, very ill," said he; "you must have suffered a great deal."

"Yes, a great deal."

"Why then did you not call in the doctor? You know nothing, not even how to take care of yourself when you are ill."

For a whole year did the poor martyr live on with the death-stroke in her heart, her only consolation being that the blow was mortal. For a whole year was she going down to the grave. How life clings to one at thirty!

"What is the matter with your wife?" his friends would say to Don Andrew.

"A jaundice," he would answer; "nothing seems to do her any good. Heaven help me in all my troubles!" And to his wife when they were alone, "The doctor does not know

what is the matter with you, and you don't tell him. *You know nothing*, not even how to tell what you are suffering from."

At last the fifth victim of the murder was near her end. Her strength was gone; her arms crossed upon her breast; the hour of her last long rest was come; and the confessor was by her pillow, weeping and consoling. She was ready to appear before the judgment-bar of God, and feeling that but a few moments of life remained yet to ebb, she made a sign to the bystanders to quit the room, and called her husband to her.

"Father of my children," said she, in solemn tones, "I have known two things in this life.—"

"What?" said the guilty coward, trembling.

"*To be silent in life*, because I am a mother, and *forgiving in death*, because I am a Christian," said the noble martyr, closing her eyes on this life to open them on eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SISTER'S AVENGER.

"A strange story!" the reader will say. "The murderer gets off scot free, and even thrives on the proceeds of his crime, although the means of bringing him to justice are within easy reach." Patience, good reader; please let the story unfold itself and its mysteries in its own way, and remember nothing disconcerts a story-teller so much as a yawn or an interruption.

Early in our narrative mention was made of a servant-maid, whose reputation was blasted, and whose ruin was occasioned, because she had been suspected of having had a hand in the murder. This poor girl had a brother, who loved her well. He was convinced of her innocence of the crime, and was determined to avenge her. Pedro, unlike most of his countrymen, was cool and perse-

vering. He was a person of quiet unassuming habits; his sister's shame was the first and deepest sorrow of his life. Until that unhappy event his days were passed in comparative contentment at his desk in a small mercantile establishment in the city of M——. It was Pedro who induced his sister to come and live in that city. He blamed himself unjustly, lamented his well-meant kindness, and he never ceased to look on himself as being in some measure the occasion of his sister's misfortunes. But the quiet clerk was not one to spend his time in vain regret. He knew it required more than common shrewdness and tact to discover a murderer who had committed his crime with such deep secrecy. It was not at his desk he was to find the means of detecting the murderer, yet it was at his desk he formed the plan he was to follow in tracing the criminal. He gave up his situation, and appeared one morning in the office of the chief of the detective police of the city of M——. The chief was a kindly old gentleman, and was quickly impressed by the sorrowful demeanour of his early visitor.

"Let me hope, young man," said he to Pedro, "that, whatever be the cause of your visit, it is not beyond my power to serve you."

Encouraged by the friendly way in which he was spoken to, Pedro answered, "If you have had a sister, I am sure, senor, you will interest yourself in my sorrow."

"We are alone, pray tell me what your sorrow is."

"It is an erring sister's shame."

"Excuse me, but a Spaniard rarely seeks to avenge an insult offered to his sister by coming to a person in my position. I am, however, glad you have come to me, and instead of rousing feelings of private vengeance, it would have been more in keeping with my office and my years to counsel you to keep the laws of your country."

"I have never broken the laws of my country, and even if I wished to avenge my sister it would be both silly and wrong to raise my arm yet, for I know not whom to strike."

"Tell me all the circumstances; I will do my best to help you."

"Thank you, senor, you know almost all the circumstances. My sister was one of the persons accused of being concerned in the murder committed in Don Andrew Penalta's house last month. She was innocent of that crime, but the suspicion of the deed has made her an outcast. I wish to redeem my sister; I wish to bring the murderer to justice."

"I thoroughly sympathize with you; redeem your poor sister by all means. But how do you expect to bring to justice a murderer who has so far baffled our best detectives?"

"My motive and my sorrow may succeed where the trained skill of your people has failed."

"I piously hope so; but you have not yet informed me how I can assist you."

"There is only one way, senor: make me a member of your detective police; you may easily waive some of the formalities. You are a magistrate; in the presence of witnesses

I am ready to take the usual oath of obedience and faithfulness."

Before many days had passed Pedro was engaged in his new pursuit. Closely, constantly he watched Don Andrew Penalta's house. No one passed in or out unnoticed by him. In a short time he knew the master and his servants by their voice and by their gesture. The house had a strange fascination for him; whenever he was not engaged in another part of the city he was sure to be found in the immediate neighbourhood of Don Andrew's house. Yet when Don Andrew left the city of M——, Pedro sought his chief, and obtained permission to accompany him. He even succeeded in obtaining an exchange, and the new house of Don Andrew took quite as strong a hold of Pedro as the old one did. Events follow one another rapidly. Pedro rescued his sister from her life of shame, and the proud, scoffing philosopher of the nineteenth century, Don Andrew Penalta, had risen from one position of eminence to another, till men began to conjecture

what other successes and distinctions were within the reach of his splendid abilities.

The death of his wife left Don Andrew free to make a second choice. His ambition urged him to marry again as soon as possible, but he was not willing to offend against the decencies of life, and his staid respectability restrained him till a becoming period had elapsed after the death of the mother of his children.

At last the hour came in which Don Andrew was to ask the hand of the only daughter of a Spanish noble of high military distinction. He presented himself, and was accepted; but very much against his inclination and his entreaties, the lady could not be induced to become his wife until a full year had borne witness to his admiration and affection. Perhaps she was a spoilt child, or a coquette, and would have her wilful way. She said that a prize lightly won was lightly esteemed; that she had early formed a resolution not to marry any one who would not prove his estimate of her worth by awaiting her pleasure to fix the time to go with him to

the altar. This was the first time for years that any one had dared to dictate to Don Andrew, and the proud philosopher felt it very hard to submit to a woman's dictation; but there was no help for it, he should either give up his pretensions at once, or wait a whole year, till a girl's silly caprice would give him the right of dictating to her, and of bending all her acts into obedience to his sovereign will.

A year is the storehouse of numerous surprises. Where was Pedro all this time? No longer haunting the house, but haunting Don Andrew himself. One evening, soon after he had been promised the hand of the Lady Isabella, Don Andrew took a quiet stroll in a lonely, unfrequented place, to review the events of the past ten years, and to form his plans for the future. He was closely watched, though he knew it not. As he was about to enter a road darkened by overshadowing trees, he put his hand into his pocket, drew it out again, and the sharp click caused by a pistol hammer was distinctly heard by his watcher.

"Ah!" thought Pedro, "the great *Penalta* carries firearms, so do I; it is a duty with me, perhaps it is a *necessity* with him."

Penalta walked slowly up and down about a hundred paces on the road. All around was quiet, still, lonely. "It is just eleven years to-night," said Penalta to himself.

"*Just eleven years to-night*," mentally repeated his watcher, "so it is, since the ruin of my poor sister was begun by you, Penalta, allowing the suspicion of a murder to fall upon her. Slanderer! coward! murderer! I have watched you!"

"The only clue," said Penalta, again speaking to himself, "is that confounded *head-line*, '*The morrow is uncertain.*' Strange that should have escaped me!"

"A *clue!*" murmured Pedro. "Then he is *murderer* of more than poor Maria's good name. How *such* a man will speak his thoughts aloud. Ah, *senor*, the English poet is right when he says, '*There is a destiny that shapes our ends.*' St. Jago, grant that I may catch something more."

Now vexed, now pleased with his own

thoughts, Don Andrew continued his reverie till the shades of evening deepened into night, and warned him to return to his home. The detective followed him. A sister's avenger was behind him; an avenger schooled into caution by eleven years' watching and waiting; an avenger who might be thwarted, or baffled, but who could never be turned from the purpose which had become the passion of his life,—to detect a criminal, and to make him suffer for his crime.

Don Andrew slept well that night. Pedro slept little. The few words he had overheard set him thinking; the more he thought over them, the more puzzled he became. Hoping to find out their meaning next day, he breathed a prayer to St. Jago, and fell asleep at last. He arose early next morning to resume his task. There was an old woman in the neighbourhood who had come from the village of Peacevale with Don Andrew's wife. She had remained with Don Andrew's family till Rosalia died. After that sad event the house had no longer any charm for her. The proud Penalta was cold and despotic, so she

left the house in her old age, and went to live in a quiet spot beside the churchyard, that she might be near the grave of Rosalia.

To this old woman Pedro bent his steps while it was yet early. The Spanish people rise up much earlier in the morning than the people of our cold climate. Pedro met the old woman telling her beads as she returned from her devotions in the church.

“Good morning, Donna Ana.”

“Good morning, Senor Pedro. How is your sister Maria ?”

“A thousand thanks, she is quite well. May I go into the house with you ?”

“I shall be delighted.”

“I suppose you often think of Senora Penalta ?”

“Never shall I forget my dear child Rosalia, and how much she pitied your poor sister.”

“Was Senora Rosalia happy while you lived with her ? There were strange rumours once afloat with regard to her death. Was she ill-treated, neglected ?”

“I loved her too well, (it was I who nursed

her,) and I was too much in her society, not to notice whatever gave her pain or pleasure. I remember the day and the hour the death-sickness fell on her. I was coming down-stairs, and was about to go into her room, when her younger boy Carlos was reading from a scrap of paper, which he handed to her a moment after, ‘Count not on the morrow ; for thee it is uncertain.’ It was a warning, a prophecy ; from that moment she seemed too sorely stricken ever to recover.”

“ Did you notice the paper ?”

“ Yes, well ; the boy was laughing, and held it up to my eyes, and bid me read it, a moment before he gave it to his mother.”

“ Indeed ! what was it like ? You have a fine memory. It was an odd thing,—‘ *The morrow is uncertain* ;’ very like an expression I heard from a person I know well.”

“ Oh, ‘tis a common expression ; it was only a head-line on Andrew’s copy-book. It was a strange thing, the boy wrote his *name in red ink* : and now a stranger thing strikes me, I never thought of it before ; the same kind of a paper, with the same words, was

handed to his grandmother on the morning before she died; it was twice a warning of death."

"Did you see his grandmother take the paper?"

"Yes; as I said, they always allowed me to stay with them when neither Don Andrew nor strangers were present. The old lady made some remarks about the date, and after a few minutes she rolled up into it twenty *onzas*, which she said she would leave to her grandson; but we never heard of the legacy afterwards, for she was murdered on that very night."

"I am sure you would know that bit of paper if you should ever see it again."

CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE PALACE TO THE SCAFFOLD.

Pedro thought he had done a good morning's work, and anxious not to arouse the old woman's suspicions, took his leave after a

few minutes' conversation on the gossip of the place. To follow up the trail cautiously was now the difficult task before him. He knew he should have to deal with a powerful enemy, and that if he failed in procuring a conviction he should be entirely at the mercy of a relentless foe. Eleven years had he waited to find a clue that might put him on the track of the murderer. His success was quite unexpected. He was flushed with excitement, but he was too wary to give speech to his thoughts, and to avoid the risk of any indiscretion, he went to a village some distance away, and remained there nearly a whole week.

The death of Don Andrew's wife broke up his home circle very much. Penalta's ambitious schemes took up a great deal of his time, while his cold reserve and sarcastic manner greatly estranged his children from him. Besides, they remembered from earliest infancy the piercing annoyances their mother had to bear, and the biting sneers and withering contempt which she endured with religious patience for the sake of her children.

And now that their father intended to form a new matrimonial alliance, their former love for their home was almost altogether lost. Their sister was like their mother, and, like her, she had to endure ill-treatment and contempt. Andrew lived a good deal in Seville. He was fond of poring over old volumes of Spanish literature. His father was displeased that his talents did not take a more active turn ; he sneeringly told him he might, if he liked, go and be an author, and starve in a garret. Carlos, on the other hand, was a gay, careless youth, good-hearted, but fond of romances and Quixotic ideas. Penalta was disappointed in his children ; but he consoled himself with the hope that his second marriage might bless him with children more inclined and better fitted to follow in his footsteps, and to rival his successes.

As Pedro was strolling one evening along the bank of a deep sluggish stream, in the village to which he had gone, he heard a loud cry for help quite close to him. He looked up and down the stream, and then saw a boy of some sixteen or eighteen years on the

other side of the stream in a most critical situation, vainly endeavouring to keep his head above the water, while he was as vainly trying to release his feet, which had got entangled in the dense brushwood as he had stumbled over the bank into the stream. Pedro saw his perilous situation, plunged into the water, and made to his rescue.

"Can you swim, senor?" he asked, as he held the head of the half-drowned boy above the water.

"Yes," answered the other.

"Come, then, I'll pull you into the stream; 'tis the quickest way to release you."

A few moments saw the rescuer and the rescued sitting on the bank. The youth soon forgot his danger, and burst out laughing at the strange position he had just been in.

"You may laugh, senor," said Pedro; "you have had a happy escape."

"Yes; and I have not thanked you yet."

"Thanked me, senor! I know you are grateful, for I am sure you did not intend to put yourself into such an awkward adventure."

"I shall obtain you greater favours than

my poor thanks. My father is Don Andrew Penalta."

"And you are his son, Senor Carlos."

"You know my name?"

"I did not know it when I jumped into the stream, and I hope you will not speak of the matter to Don Andrew; I need no favours from him."

The boy blushed, and was about to speak; but Pedro interrupted him. "Excuse me, I did not mean to say anything rude; I merely wished to say my wants are so few, and my life so retiring, favours from Don Andrew would only embarrass me. If we ever meet again, please to think of me as kindly as you do now, though my acts, like my words, may not seem worthy of your kindness. My name is Pedro Escritorio."

About a week after this adventure Pedro went to see the chief of the detective department in the city of M—. His plans were almost quite ripe to be put into immediate operation, but he wished to have his chief's approval of them before he began to act. The chief was walking in the public park,

and thither Pedro went to find him. The chief was accustomed to sit in a quiet nook by himself whenever he went to the park to enjoy a cigar *al fresco*. Pedro knew where he should find him, and as soon as the chief saw him he beckoned him to a seat beside him. "Well, good Pedro, be cautious; there is a son of Don Andrew P—, with some other youngsters, chatting just behind us. You hear their voices."

"I do, señor, distinctly."

"Listen! listen!"

And young Carlos, talking in his usual easy manner, began: "That letter you have read, Tomas, reminds me of a very strange event that happened in my family, and as the evening is so drowsy, and as the band is not come to play, I shall tell it to you if you are in a listening mood."

"Yes, yes," said they all in a chorus.

"The story is a very sad one; I never spoke of it before. Somehow, we instinctively knew it was a forbidden subject at home. When I was very young, my brother Andrew, having finished his copy one day,

brought it in great glee to my grandmother. The head-line was an ominous one, ‘Count not on the morrow; for thee it is uncertain.’ The poor old lady never saw the morrow; she was foully murdered that very night. I was separated from all my young playmates; my parents left the city for good. Nearly ten years later I found that selfsame copy amongst a lot of pieces of waste paper in my father’s room. I showed it to my mother. She was pronounced very ill that night: and though she lingered for months and months, she never smiled again; and although she was only about thirty years, her hair became quite blanched. I fear it is the repetition of this strange coincidence that has blighted poor Andrew’s life. The remembrance of it casts a shadow over our house, and when myself and my sister are alone together we never speak; we know our thoughts are the same, and they are too gloomy to be spoken. I am homeless; since my poor mother died I have had *no home.*”

“My dear Carlos,” said one of the young

men, "do try not to remember those deep sorrows."

"I like the company of strangers, it distracts me, and keeps me from being for ever haunted by these memories. One hour I am gay, the next hour I am miserable, and I feel this evening as if the shadow of some other heavy sorrow were falling upon me."

The park was now crowded, the band had already begun to play, and the young men hastened to mingle with the crowd, eager to relieve their hearts of the sad feelings produced by the story of their companion's sorrows.

"Poor boy!" said Pedro; "my heart bleeds for him!"

The chief answered, "And my heart also pities him. How unconsciously he has multiplied witnesses against his father, and closed the manacles on his hands and the fetters on his feet! Scrap by scrap, bit by bit, the evidence has come to us, and accident has helped intelligence to lay our hands upon the criminal. Several have innocently suffered for his crime; now his own time is come, and

he will have to make satisfaction to his God and to his country."

That very night Don Andrew Penalta was arrested for the crime of murder. Instead of exciting sympathy for him, his importance, his successes, his abilities, only added to the horror of the crime. The charge was not more unexpected than the mass of evidence against him. The servants who were in the house on the night of the murder were again summoned and examined. The witnesses were surprised at the amount of evidence they were able to give; for when they were examined eleven years before they had been too frightened, too much appalled at the crime, to be able to recollect themselves, or give any satisfactory information. Circumstances hitherto unnoticed were recalled, circumstances long forgotten were remembered, every hour seemed to bring fresh evidence; even the old, neglected, untenanted house witnessed against the proud Penalta. During the interval between the arrest and the trial of Penalta the old house fell into the hands of a new owner. He was too practical

a man to allow it to encumber the ground ; he pulled it down to build another in its stead, and in its ruins were found the blood-stained instruments of the crime.

The veil which hid the criminal so long was torn to shreds, and the sneering Penalta, the polished villain, the scoffing philosopher, the inhuman husband, the detected murderer, was condemned.



THE PRIEST'S ADOPTED NIECE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a calm, quiet evening in the autumn of '46.

The departing beams of the setting sun shed a flood of golden light on hill, and tree, and plain. Silence brooded over the face of the country. The whistle of the shepherd, or the bark of his dog, was the only sound to break the death-like stillness.

On this quiet autumn evening, Father Tom, a curate in a wild district in the west of Ireland, was going to attend a sick call.

Gentle reader, let us accompany the good priest; we shall find him doing a work of mercy, which will be the source of many a

kind and heroic act. His stout old pony carries Father Tom slowly but safely over the old mountain road. The pony started from the beaten path, as if frightened at the sight of something unusual. The priest chid his dumb companion, and was about to pass onward at a brisker pace, when a low, piteous cry broke on his ear. Looking carefully around, he espied a little girl of some eight or nine summers, lying under the shelter of a large rock, about fifteen or twenty yards before him. Throwing the reins from his hand, he dismounted, and went quickly to where the child was lying. The poor creature pushed back the straggling ringlets of her unkempt hair from her eyes, and stared into the face of the priest. And then she began to cry again more piteously.

“What is your name? where is mother, where is your father?” asked the priest.

“Dead,” replied the child, “and Mary and Willie is dead too.”

“Where have you come from?”

“Oh! 'tis far away in the mountains: Don't, don't leave me here.”

The priest answered her appeal to his protection by gently lifting her into the saddle, and holding her on by the arms, while he walked himself to the cabin of the sick person whom he had been called to attend.

It was night when he reached the place, and the wife of the poor sick peasant was standing at the door, awaiting the priest. Placing the child in the arms of the woman, the priest hastened into the cabin. The child, having fallen asleep soon after Father Tom had placed her on the pony, began to cry as soon as she awoke, and found herself in the arms of a stranger. The countrywoman soothed the child as well as she could, and having made her somewhat calmer, she asked her who she was, and many other questions.

"Who are you, *asthore*? I never saw you before."

"I am Rosie."

"You have a nice, sweet name; but where is your father and mother?"

"Father and mother is dead, and Mary and Willie."

"Don't cry, *asthore*."

"You are cryin', the priest was cryin', every one is cryin' now; what is the raison?"

"They are cryin' for you, *agrah*, an' it isn't but they have raison enough to cry for themselves; but God's holy will be done. Let us stop spakin', the priest is comin' down from my poor sick man."

"Well, your riverence, what do you think of how Mick is?"

"You'll have him well again in a few days."

"God's blessin' on you for the consolin' word."

"Amen. Biddy, did you ever see that child before?"

"No, your riverence; the poor darlin', she looks poorly, and she has neither father nor mother."

"Well, we must try to find her a home. What is your name, child?"

"Rosie, sir."

"Will you come with me, Rosie?" said the priest.

"I will, sir," answered the child.

"Come on, then." The priest, taking the

child again in his arms, placed her on the pony, and bent his steps towards his home, where he arrived at a late hour in the night.

CHAPTER II.

Half hidden by tall old poplars stood the priest's humble cottage.

It looked down pityingly on the wretched houses in the neighbourhood. Its door was always open to the poor, and often they came to it to get consolation and encouragement from the priest, or a morsel of food from his sister, to whom we shall take the liberty of introducing the reader.

Father Tom's sister, Ellen O'Brien, or, as she was more familiarly called by her poor neighbours, Miss Ellen, was the priest's housekeeper. Tall, slender, and pensive looking, her mien and countenance gave token of early sorrow. The spring and the summer of her life had passed; she was now in the autumn of her years. Her parents died while

she was still young, and her brother was the only one to whom she would look for protection, companionship, and love. He was a student in a strange land; she yearned for his return. He came at last, and hastened to his sister. When he was appointed curate by the shore of "Corrib's wild and gusty lake," she went with him to enjoy his society, to cheer him in his loneliness, and to enrich him with one of the choicest blessings which a lonely man may have,—a sister's love.

It is past eleven o'clock when the priest reaches the pathway leading to his cottage. His sister awaits his return, and hastening out to meet him, she anxiously inquires why he is on foot, and if any accident has befallen him.

"No accident, Ellen," replies her brother; "but I have had to escort a distressed little damsel."

"And like a good knight and true you gave up your steed to the fair wanderer."

The little girl, accustomed only to the language of the peasantry, did not understand those words, and thinking there was little

kindness awaiting her, sobbed in shame and vexation.

"Shame on us!" said the priest, "we seem to mock the child's distress. Take her into the cottage, Ellen; you are better able to quiet her troubles than I am."

The night had passed; morning was come again; the trees, the hills, and the plains again looked fresh and beautiful in the beams of the rising sun.

Rosie had slept the peaceful sleep of childhood. She dreamed of the mother whom she had so lately lost; she thought she was one of a group of happy children; merry laughter and pleasant voices were ringing in her ears; but the merry laughter ceased, the pleasant voices "melted away," and she awoke with sorrow in her young heart. Her waking thoughts sorely puzzled her. How had she come there, and where was she?

Last night she was out on the wild moor; her feet were cut with the sharp stones, and her hands were torn with the rough brambles. She at last remembered the kind words of

the priest and his sister, and all the scenes of the day before were recalled to her mind.

The bright light of the risen sun is streaming through the small window into her little room. She sees the sanded floor, she looks at the whitewashed walls, and her gaze rests on the solitary picture, the only ornament in the apartment. What a sad picture it is! What speechless agony in the upturned eyes! The sadness of the picture fascinates the child. Look where she would the eyes of the picture seemed gazing into hers. She looks at it again and again, then turns away; but the spell is upon her, she cannot help looking at it, and she bursts into tears.

"What ails you, child?" asks Ellen O'Brien, who, having overheard the sobbing of the child, came to inquire the cause of her distress.

"Oh! the picture, miss."

"Well, what about the picture?"

"I thought it was cryin', an' it made me cry."

"Crying! So you might well indeed have thought. It is the picture of a fond Mother;

her Son was taken from her arms by wicked men ; they dragged Him, all bleeding and sore, along a weary, dusty road, on to a hill, where they nailed Him to a cross, and put Him to death. But you are crying more than ever ; I must take away the picture till you are stronger.”

“ Oh ! don’t ; ’tis the picture of the Blessed Virgin.”

“ Yes, child, ’tis the picture of the Mother of Sorrows.”

The child’s unrest was allayed by Miss O’Brien’s soothing words. The fatigue she had borne, and the quiet of the priest’s cottage, threw her into a peaceful slumber, and the lark had mounted heavenward, and had sung his cheerful song many a time that forenoon, before she awoke from her refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER III.

In spite of the sorrows she had borne, Rosie was a pleasant, handsome child. Her obedience and gentleness won the good priest's heart. The priest and his sister loved the quiet and retirement of their humble home. Rosie was alone and friendless ; there was a spare nook in the cottage which she could occupy ; she would be a companion to Miss O'Brien ; perhaps she might one day be a help and a solace to the priest. Be that as it might, Father Tom, pitying her helplessness, resolved to befriend her, and to take care of her temporal and eternal welfare. The child was become the priest's adopted niece. She was taught to regard the priest as her uncle, and his sister as her aunt. These names were a little strange to her at first, but, with a child's easy power of adapting itself to circumstances, she soon learned to

speak to her new friends as if she had known them all her life by the names she was told to address them.

She was no longer disfigured by the rags of a beggar. Her blue eyes beamed with light and joy, her flaxen ringlets danced in the wind, and she looked, as indeed she was, a sprightly, happy child. And fervently did she thank her Virgin Mother for her quiet, happy home. She grew up a useful helper in every work of mercy; whenever there was an errand of kindness to run, Rosie was a cheerful messenger.

Quietly, quickly days and years glided by. As Rosie grew older and stronger, her sphere of usefulness became wider. Her young heart was the home of patience and love. It was the joy of the good priest's heart to form her mind to noble and generous aims, to a pure and earnest love of her country and faith. When tired with reading in the long wintry nights, she would sit at the feet of the white-haired priest, and listen with throbbing heart to the strange stories that he told of home and foreign scenes, when the priest was

scorned and insulted by the freethinkers abroad, and distrusted and hated by the minions of a bad government at home.

Rosie laid up in her heart of hearts the sufferings of Ireland's priests and people, and she vowed in her inmost soul that all her strength should be spent in relieving the wants, and in soothing the sorrows of the poor. Many a noble heart has made the same resolve, and many a strong arm has been devoted to the same holy end; yet few, perhaps, relieved so many wants, or soothed so many sorrows, as the lowly heroine of our story.

Again the cold bright moon and the twinkling stars are pouring their mild, soft light down upon the world.

Three years have passed since Rosie was a houseless, homeless child on the lonely moor. She has made herself a wide circle of friends. Wherever she goes the prayers of the people go with her; wherever she comes, patience and love come with her. Every day sees her doing some work of charity. On Sundays she gathers the children around her, to teach

them the catechism. She coaxes on the little ones to a knowledge of the mercy of Jesus, and the kindness of Mary. Rosie is eloquent because she is earnest. The words she speaks to the children are caught up by their parents, and are repeated at many a western fireside as the poor while away, in their simple, sinless manner, the long hours of the wintry night.

Close by the moor, where Rosie was once a friendless child, stands a poor cabin. On a coarse, hard bed a woman is lying ill of famine fever. The poor creature will never recover. Rosie is sitting beside the bed, and from time to time she moistens the lips of the dying woman with a cooling drink. There is not a sound to break the weird repose of nature except the ravings of the sick woman. At times her voice grows stronger, and her words become plainer. She speaks of a child abandoned by its parents, and of a young mother who, in the frenzy of illness, cast her newly-born babe from her bosom, and rushed out to perish in the storm. In the pauses of her raving she gathers breath

to curse the husband of that young mother, the father of that child. She at last awakes, and is conscious. Rosie, still watching beside her, says to her, "Are you easier, Mary?"

"I'll soon be well, Miss Rosie; but 'tis night, an' you're still here! Ah! 'tis betther, I have much to tell you, but what's the use?"

"Oh yes, Mary, do tell me."

"What, should I vex your mind with what can do you no good to know? You are happy with your uncle, the priest; but the priest is not your uncle."

"I am aware of that, Mary; but I love him well; he has all the love my parents should have if they lived."

"Your parents! you never saw them!"

"My poor Mary, your mind is wandering again."

"No, child, 'tis not wandering now; you never knew your parents. Listen, an' I'll tell you all I know while I am able. Your mother was a *Catholic*—"

"And my father a Protestant."

"Yes, yes. Your mother married against her father's will ; she was an only child : he hated her on account of her disobedience ; he died, an' it was said he cursed her; she never saw him from the day she left his house to get married. Your father was a wild man, an', I am afraid, a bad man. He quarrelled with your mother, he left her, an' went no one knew where. She couldn't stay where she lived ; she came to this part of the counthry. When she came first she used to wander all day by herself in the fields ; she used to shun the people ; she was always cryin', and sayin' a curse was followin' her wherever she went. Some were afraid of her ; but I pitied her, I watched her, for I knew there was throuble on her lonely heart. She began to like me, an' to let me come near her. I pressed her to tell me one day what was weighing on her mind ; the poor creature cried when I asked her, but she tould me all, much as I have given it to you.

"A little before you were born she used to say it was betther for you never to hear of your mother's misery, as it might make you

hate your father. The night you were born your mother was wild and ravin'; we had to watch her very closely. I sat watchin' all night, an' a wild night it was; the loud moanin' of the dismal wind made me fall asleep; I could nearly wish I never woke again. I awoke, however, and the room was dark and cold; I went to the bed at once; your mother was gone! A half-dozen of the village people ran out to search for her; they couldn't find her, but the next day she was found dead. It was my sisther nursed you. I was far away when my sisther an' her children died of a sudden an' deadly sickness. I came home, an' you were with the priest an' his sisther."

"May God bless them!"

"Amen, child, an' they have God's blessin'."

"Does the priest know what you have told me?"

"He does, I told him all; an' now here is the last thing: your mother gave it to me to mind when she got ill."

Here the dying woman handed Rosie a curiously wrought locket. It opened the

moment she touched it with her finger. Within there was a miniature picture of a beautiful woman on one side, and on the other there was the likeness of a man.

"Whose pictures are these, Mary?"

"They are your father's an' mother's."

Rosie kissed the faint likeness of her mother, but the moment her eyes fell on the memento of her father she thought of his wickedness, and hurriedly closing the locket, hid it from her sight.

"Is the moon gone away, Rosie?"

"No, Mary."

"Is the fire and the candle out?"

"No, Mary, no."

"Ah! 'tis the darkness of death comin' over me. Blessed be God I've seen the priest. Let me hould your hand, Rosie, I am dyin'; maybe I'll see your mother in heaven. Rosie, Rosie. Oh, holy Virgin, pray for me!"

In another moment poor old Mary was dead. Her death seemed so like a quiet slumber that it was not till her fingers began to stiffen and grow cold that Rosie could believe that she was indeed dead. Then

kneeling down on the damp floor of the cabin, she prayed the Almighty to have mercy on the soul of her mother's humble but faithful friend.

All that long, long night Rosie watched beside the dead. The darkness was losing itself in the grey dawn when Rosie, pale and haggard, reached the house of the priest. Early though it was, he was standing outside the door. He was too poor to be enervated by luxuries; he was too watchful to sleep when his people needed the comforts of religion.

Rosie hastened to him, and drew him within the cottage. Worn out with the grief which her mother's sad history excited, as well as with the fatigue of a long sleepless night, she sank exhausted into the nearest seat.

"Uncle, uncle, I know all; Mary told me all about my poor mother's history."

"It was right," said the priest, "that you should know all, and I would have told you everything some day myself; but Mary came again to our place, and I knew she could tell

you the sad, sad story better than I could. I advised her to tell you all; I knew she would do so last night. Go now, my child, to your room; you need rest and quiet. Is there any one to look after poor Mary's remains?"

"Yes, uncle."

Rosie went to her room, and the priest went to attend to the spiritual wants of his poor flock.

CHAPTER IV.

A few years more are gone. Ellen O'Brien is dead, and Rosie is listening eagerly to the whispered accents of the good old priest. He is dying; Rosie is losing her best and now her only friend in all the wide world.

"Rosie, my child, you will soon be alone."

"I was alone once before, uncle."

"You were, child, and God sent you a protector. I hope I have not betrayed the trust Heaven placed in my hands. Rosie, I have no wealth to leave you, but if you will

follow my counsel you will never want riches. Leave the world; do what your heart prompts you to do; give yourself wholly to Almighty God. He makes no mistakes; if you trust Him He will take care of you. Enter the convent of which we were speaking; happily I was able to make the necessary arrangements with the Superior. When I am dead hasten to her."

These were the last words Rosie heard from her kind old friend. Worn out by the toils of a long, useful life, his wasted body could not bear a long struggle; his lamp of life flickered for a little while, then died out, to burn for ever in the sunlight of God's presence.

Rosie's heart is burthened with keenest grief. She sadly misses the smile of the white-haired priest; every one she speaks to murmurs a prayer for the repose of his sister's soul. Every day she goes to visit the grave of the priest and his sister; she cannot tear herself away from the place. But her conscience is not at peace, for the whispered counsel of the dying priest is yet unfulfilled.

At length she comes to visit the churchyard for the last time; she bids an affectionate farewell to the grave of her friends.

A trembling hand pulls the convent bell. A female figure, deeply veiled, waits outside the door. In another moment the door opens, and a lay-sister asks, "Whom do you seek?"

"The Reverend Mother," the stranger replies.

The Superioress appears, and Rosie at once unfolds the nature of her visit.

"You are come from the West; you are Father O'Brien's adopted niece? Then rest assured you shall be welcomed by all the sisters. You know the duties of a Sister of Mercy. You saw the bitter effects of the famine fever. There will be hardly any change in your life; follow the same course as you have followed hitherto, and you shall be worthy of your vocation."

The novitiate is ended. Rosie has taken the name of Mary, and Sister Mary is known where there are diseases and suffering. Cheerfully and quietly she goes into the

squalid haunts of poverty and sickness. She loved the poor when she was a child ; she grew up loving them ; she understands them well, their longings, their sorrows ; she has a rare talent for nursing them ; the fiercest become gentle under her soothing care ; the curse dies away on the lips of the hardened scoffer when Sister Mary appears ; she is a messenger of mercy, an angel of peace.

A room in one of the Dublin hospitals is darkened. After a fierce struggle a maddened sufferer is overpowered by the warders, and tied down to his bed. But great illness soon weakens the strongest. The bands are removed, and the sufferer lies as helpless as a child. But his soul is not at rest ; many a muttered oath and curse bear witness to his disquiet. Sister Mary has charge of him ; while he raves forth his blasphemies she prays for his recovery. She minds him well. She does simply what she is told to do by the medical attendants. She makes no suggestions, she changes nothing, she advises nothing ; she is silent, thoughtful, obedient, and therefore a skilful nurse.

The patient has grown used to the sound of her voice, and he curses when he hears it. She has discovered that he curses when she speaks, so she attends him in silence. Many a weary hour has she sat near his bedside, listening to his wild ravings. What are they? Some of them awake the tenderest yearnings of her heart, and make her forget her fatigue.

One day the sick man calls for Sister Mary. She has not been in his room all day. A rough warder answers him: "It is ill you deserve her care; your oaths and curses are enough to shock the worst; how dare you vent your foulness so before one of the sisters! You shan't see her for some time if I can help it. Lie down there now; when you are left to yourself you'll soon be tame enough."

The sick man falls back wearily on his bed. For the first time in his life he feels he is abandoned. It is hard for him to think he is left alone. He is very quiet, but his weary loneliness presses heavily upon him. He

would give all the joys of his former life for the sound of a footfall in his room.

It is the solemn hour of twilight, when silence is truly weird. His loneliness is too much for him. He remembers the words of the warder, and fearing there is a long night of unbroken silence before him, he becomes helpless, unhappy, and bursts into tears. It is a long time since a tear dimmed his eye before. No one who "dares do all that may become a man" need blush that his eye has wept; a tear-drop has often changed a course of recklessness into a course of penance. Tears are salt, but there is in tears that which is better than the world's best joys.

The ear of the lonely man is strained to catch the slightest sound. Oh, for a kind voice to break the stillness of that twilight hour! He hears a light step approaching; it comes nearer and nearer; it pauses at his door; the pause seems an age; will the door never open? It opens at last, and Sister Mary enters. She approaches the bedside of the sick man, and asks if she can do anything for him before leaving the hospital.

"Yes, yes, let me hear your voice; speak to me for a little while."

"You feel much easier; your voice seems to have regained its natural tone."

"My heart and soul are changed. I have been a brute; I have never thanked you; I never felt weary in all my life before. How many weary hours you watched beside me! how many wicked things I said! Can you forgive me? Say I was mad, anything; but say you forgive me!"

"I forgive you indeed; but is it not better to ask God to forgive you?"

"Oh, may God help me!"

"And He will if you ask Him."

"I have done deep wrong."

"But you may repent."

"If I thought so!"

"Think of it! be sure of it!"

"How much more time have you, sister, before you go to the convent?"

"Half an hour."

"If they were my last words, I would ask you to stay that little while with me."

Anxious to relieve him, Sister Mary sat down beside him.

"I want to tell you what I was, what a life I have led. If I were a Catholic I would gladly make my confession. It must be such a relief to speak out, without fear of betrayal, what is eating away one's heart; to be consoled and cheered. My mother died when I was very young. My father never denied me a single indulgence. I abused his kindness again and again; I grew older and worse. I was sent to the University. I was expelled. I came home, quarrelled with my father; he sent me abroad. I went to Paris; there I felt myself cut off from my family. I was more reckless than ever. I drank in the teachings of the revolutionists; they seemed to me the only teachings worth learning; they were preached under the guise of advancement and enlightenment, but the unbridled liberty they advocated was their only recommendation.

"I was wounded severely in a duel. I was nursed through my illness by a religious. She was not like you, but she too was very

good. I was disgusted with the world's wickedness, because my wound had shut me up in the hospital, and forced me to reflect. As long as I was able to share in the revels, and contribute to the mirth of boon companions, they flattered me, and welcomed me amongst them. During the long weeks I lay on a sick bed not one of them came near me. It was then I saw for the first time the untiring goodness and self-sacrifice of Catholic religious. The sister who nursed me gained some influence over me; she advised me to return to my father, and to ask his forgiveness. I returned to him as soon as I was able; he saw me pale and sickly, he pitied me; he regarded me as the prodigal son coming back to his father's house. But an event soon happened which undeceived him. I was born to thwart him. When I was quite well I married a Catholic lady against my father's will. I could hardly have done anything to give him greater offence. He was reared up in the prejudices of a narrow creed; though always friendly to his Catholic neighbours, he hated their doctrines with a

hate of which no one could have thought him capable. We quarrelled. I scoffed at religion generally, I broached the worst and most offensive teachings of the times. He was shocked; he drove me from his presence for ever. I told my young wife what had happened. She advised me to go back and ask my father's pardon. I fancied she was espousing my father's quarrel. My wild, ungovernable temper, which had been the curse of my life, overcame me; I left the house, I abandoned her. I came back a few weeks later to repair the wrong I had done. I could not find her. I went to seek her in her father's house, but her father's door had been long closed against her. From that hour I have never seen her. I did my best to get some tidings of her: I got none. I despaired of ever meeting her again."

"Oh, my poor mother!" murmured Sister Mary.

"Your mother?"

"Her story is the same."

"Child, who, who are you?"

"I am a nameless child; this locket—"

"*Was mine!* How came you by it?" he asked hastily, while his eyes shot forth an angry gleam at the frightened nun.

"A few hours before my birth, and my poor mother's death, she gave it to one of the kind-hearted women who attended her in her illness."

"Then your mother was—"

"Your wife, and you are—"

"Your father."

The sick man awaited in breathless suspense the effect of this announcement. Would she disown him, would she cast him off as soon as she had found him? Sister Mary's pale cheek grew paler; her bosom heaved in pain. She arose without a word, and in a moment father and child were locked in each other's arms.

"By what name shall I call you? Alas! I do not know even the *name* of my *child*."

"Rosie."

"Rosie, you will now stay with me?"

"Yes, dear father."

"Rosie, the peace and the sorrow which I feel are surely the peace and sorrow which a

merciful God sends a dying sinner. I have done deep wrong ; say that you forgive me."

"I do forgive you, dear father ; but pray God to forgive you."

"Come nearer, child, nearer. I will die a Catholic ; send for a priest. When he leaves, come and remain with me. Pray for me, Rosie."

The priest and the penitent remained alone for an hour. When the priest left the penitent's room, the child returned to her father. All that long night Sister Mary's hands were clasped in the hands of the dying man. She felt his pulse grow weaker and weaker, till at last it ceased to beat. She placed her hand upon his heart, but his heart was stilled for ever, and Sister Mary knelt down to pray for the repose of her father's soul.

Sister Mary was not one to "put her hand to the plough and look back;" she kept her virgin's lamp well filled with oil, and brightly burning. Like her Divine Master, all her works were works of mercy and love. Her name was not known on earth, but it was written in the "Book of Life" in heaven.



THE LITTLE ARK.

“The roaring tides
The passage broke that from the land divides ;
And where the land retired the rushing ocean rides.”

CHAPTER I.

“There were few more beautiful residences than Carrigaholt Castle. Situated near the estuary of the Shannon, the landscape was everywhere enchanting ; it inspired a love of fatherland ; it embraced all that was grand and suggestive in Irish scenery. River, mountain, island, ruin, round tower, and sea, —all grouped within the prospect in magic beauty from the towers of Carrigaholt. And to this day there is not perhaps in any part

of the land a lovelier or bolder panorama than that presented to the eye when one looks over the extensive territory which the illustrious patriot, the great Earl of Clare, claimed as the owner, but which he was destined to forfeit for his loyalty."

Such is the bold and graphic description given by Mr. Lenihan of the Castle of Carrigaholt, in the ancient barony of Moyarta. The author of the "History of Limerick" tells us that the great earl was robbed of his castle and his lands. But later times have seen a deed far more heartless and unholy,—an attempt to steal from a people the faith which makes suffering light, which lifts us above the sorrows of life, and enables us to dwell in the presence of God.

When the black swollen hand of cholera lay heavy on the land, the Rev. Michael Meehan was curate in Kilrush. On the day of his appointment he, in company with the parish priest, Father Kelly, had to attend no fewer than *forty* cases of cholera. Day or night the young priest had no rest; he was hurried from house to house, and from village

to village, in anxious haste, to encourage the sick, and to overtake the dying. With a prayer on his lips, and with the crucifix in his hand, he moved without fear through terrible scenes of disease, contagion, and death. In '49 Father Meehan was removed from Kilrush to the parish of Carrigaholt. A sad sight awaited him;—he arrived in time to catch the last sigh of his predecessor, who died in the agony of cholera.

CHAPTER II.

Besides the famine and the cholera, Father Meehan had now to face a new plague. The Kildare Street Society came down like a vulture on the starving people of Carrigaholt. The people's misery was the society's opportunity. The society was big with zeal. Was it to clothe the naked, to give drink to the thirsty, and food to the starving? No, indeed. The Bible Society had used the Bible *so well* that they had grown supremely indifferent to

such carnal things as the pangs of hunger and the throes of cholera. They were not medical men, or Sisters of Mercy ; it was not their business to feel the pulse, or to moisten the lips of the dying ; yet it was their calling to use earthly means for a spiritual end,—to give the sick and the dying a mess of pottage in exchange for the birthright of faith.

It was a sore temptation, and it was full of *wanton cruelty*. It was inflicting on the poor people all the tortures which the pagans imagined Tantalus had to undergo in hell,—holding a refreshing draught to the lips of the fever-stricken sufferer, and saying to him, “I will give you to drink if you will renounce the Blessed Virgin and the Mass.” Renounce the Blessed Virgin ! renounce the Mass ! renounce his surest, his holiest convictions, renounce his faith ! Never !

The Bible Society were strong in everything but Christian charity and common humanity. They had all the strength that wealth and local influence could give ; the lords of the soil took a kindly interest in

their mission, and were quite willing to give them practical assistance.

How was Father Meehan to save his people? His parish was without a chapel; there was not even a school-house for the children. He was refused a site to build a chapel. He went to the farmers to obtain one from them, but they were unable to give it. "He made a bargain with two poor men for the use of their cabins on the roadside, for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. But even here he was baffled. At last, when all failed, his native wit came to his rescue, and suggested the means of meeting the want. He built the ark. The ark was a small wooden structure, constructed with windows all round, except at the point which was open. Within there was room for a temporary altar, at which Father Michael celebrated Mass, while he was visible through the windows to the congregation outside."

It was a strange sight in the nineteenth century to see the priest in his little box, robed in his sacred vestments, and four or five hundred people kneeling on the bleak,

barren shore, in the wind and rain, without a roof to cover them.

CHAPTER III.

The bitter zeal of Anglicanism was not yet satisfied. It was too bad to be baffled by a mere Irish priest. Was there no means of stopping him? Of course there was. Was he not blocking up the passage on the road with his congregation, and was not that forbidden by laws kindly and wisely enacted for the common good of the people? *Hey presto!* The priest and his people must get out of the way at once. But Father Michael's ready wit was quite a match for his persecutors. He had the ark placed on wheels, and had it moved about from one spot to another, according as it suited the convenience of his people. Still the bitterness of Anglican Christianity lost none of its hostility. The priest was forced to place the little ark "in

the very sea-way on the beach, while the poor knelt upon the shingle."

For four years Father Meehan used his poor wooden structure for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. "About that time the famous Dr. Cahill came to Kilkee, and learned the facts of the case. He preached upon the subject, and made the whole story known through England, Ireland, and Scotland. The force of public opinion was such that the landlord granted a site for a chapel."

In 1865 Father Meehan crossed the Atlantic to gather from the exiled Irish the funds necessary to pay off the debt of the chapels and school-houses he had built. After a life of great labour and great usefulness he died in Limerick, on the 29th of January, 1878, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, the forty-sixth of his priesthood, and the twenty-ninth of his pastorship.

An Irish journalist concludes a very charming sketch of Father Meehan's life in the following words: "Let us hope that he is gone to a greater and more abiding peace; that the many souls whose wounds he had

healed attended him through his death-agony; that the weary spirits whose burthens he had relieved came forth to guide him through the valley of shadow, and that beyond it stood the Master whom he so zealously served, to say, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant.’”

The End.



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